

## CHAPTER 11

### JAMES AND THE OTHER BROTHERS OF THE LORD

The family unit is very important to God. Having a father and mother and brothers and sisters living together in one home is something that is very pleasing and precious to God. Men did not decide long ago to start living together in families instead of living some other way. God planned family units from the very beginning. Who were the members of the very first human family (see Genesis 2:21-24; 4:1-2; 5:3-4)?

---



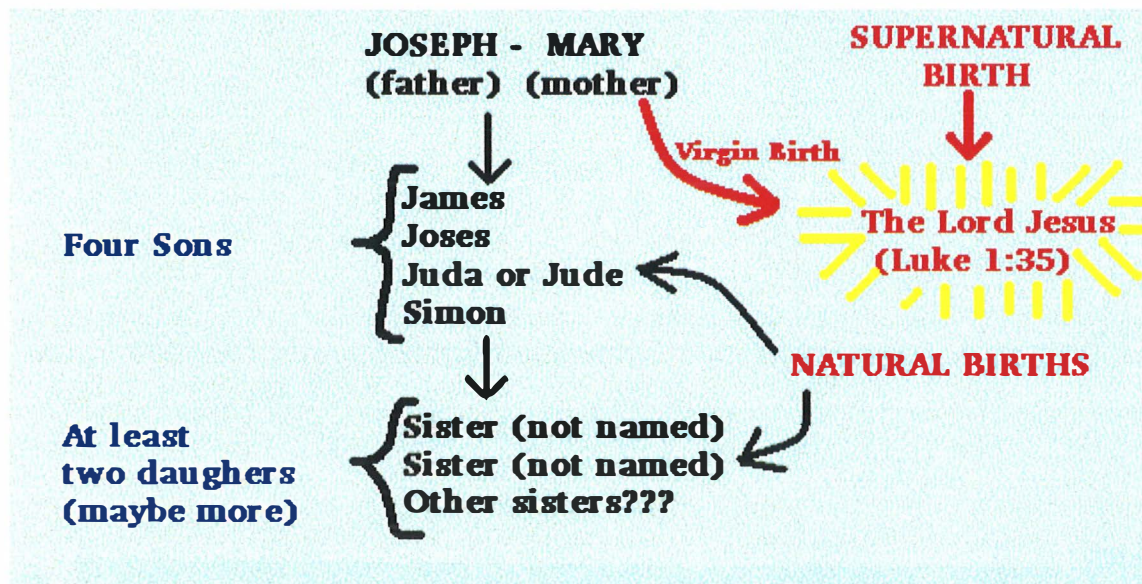
---

When God sent His Son into the world, He did not have Him grow up in a lonely cave. He did not have Him grow up in a special palace room all by Himself. No, when God sent His Son into the world, He placed Him into a human family with a father, a mother, and with brothers and sisters.

We know, of course, that Joseph was not the real father of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ was born of a virgin named Mary, and Joseph had nothing to do with this birth (Matthew 1:18-23). The conception of Jesus was SUPERNATURAL; it was a **miracle!** God did something very special in the womb of the virgin Mary which we read about in Luke 1:35: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that \_\_\_\_\_ thing which shall be \_\_\_\_\_ of thee shall be called the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_." This is the MIRACLE OF THE INCARNATION. God became flesh and dwelt among men (John 1:14 and 1 Timothy 3:16), and the God-Man was part of a human family.

The Lord Jesus was not the **only son** that Mary had. He was "her \_\_\_\_\_ son" (Matthew 1:25). Later other sons were born to her and daughters were born also. After the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph came together as husband and wife and God blessed them with many children (compare Matthew 1:25).

We learn about the children of Mary and Joseph in Matthew 13:55-56 and Mark 6:3:



The family of Joseph and Mary was quite a large family with four sons and at least two daughters, not including the Lord Jesus. Is your family this large? In His earthly family, the Lord Jesus had four brothers and at least two sisters. Sometimes we refer to these brothers and sisters as the Lord's "half-brothers" or "half-sisters" to remind us that Joseph was not the Lord's real father. We can also say that these brothers and sisters were the "uterine brothers" and the "uterine sisters" of Jesus. The word "uterine" refers to children born of the same mother (they all came from the **uterus** or womb of Mary).

### **The Unbelieving Brothers of Jesus**

What must it have been like to grow up in the same home as the Lord Jesus? Do you think that His brothers and sisters noticed that He was different? What differences do you think they might have noticed? Remember, the Lord Jesus did not perform miracles until He was about 30 years old (compare John 2:11; Luke 3:23). Actually the Bible tells us very little about those first 30 years. Most of the information we have about those years is found in Luke 2:40-52 (see especially verses 40,46,47,49,51,52). What did the brothers and sisters of Jesus have which Jesus did not have (see Hebrews 4:15)? \_\_\_\_\_ What do you think it would have been like to have a brother who was sinless?

None of us have ever had the experience of growing up with a sinless sibling. Think of it! What if you had a brother who never loses his temper, who never has a selfish moment, who is always kind, who never disobeys his parents but always submits to them, and who never is guilty of saying the wrong things? What if you had a brother who is never worried, never upset in the wrong way, always honoring and loving God, always following God's Word, never lazy, never jealous, speaking only the truth, and being the perfect example in everything he did? James and his other brothers and sisters grew up right next to sinless perfection! It must have been amazing to witness that.

Read Mark 3:19-20. Here we see the Lord Jesus packed into a crowded house. There were so many people who wanted and needed Jesus that it was impossible for the Lord to relax or even to eat. The Lord was serving these people in such a way that it seemed that He was neglecting His own personal needs such as eating and resting.

Who heard about the ceaseless and strenuous activity of Jesus (Mark 3:21)? His \_\_\_\_\_ This word "friends" actually means "those belonging to Him, those closely connected with Him," and thus the word probably refers to His family members. They were concerned for Jesus, and they wanted to "lay \_\_\_\_\_ on Him" (Mark 3:21) and take Him out of that house so that He could receive the rest and relaxation and physical nourishment that they thought He needed.

What did they think of Jesus? They said, "He is \_\_\_\_\_ Himself" (Mark 3:21). Today we would probably say it like this: "He has lost His mind! He is mad!" They simply did not understand the Lord and His ministry. His own family thought He had lost His mind!

When a believer follows the Lord and serves Him with all his heart, there may be many people who will not understand his conduct. They will not understand why he bows his head before meals, spends time in prayer, reads his Bible, and goes to Church every Sunday and Wednesday, and gives out tracts, etc. "What has happened to this person? Is he mad?" The Apostle Paul spoke of those who were "\_\_\_\_\_ for Christ's sake" (1 Cor. 4:10). People may not understand, but God understands. People may think that such a Christian has lost his senses, but God knows that he has lost nothing but has indeed found and gained a wonderful Saviour and God.

There was another time when Jesus was surrounded by people. There were some people outside who really wanted to talk to Jesus. Who were these people (Matthew 12:46-47)?

\_\_\_\_\_ (Note: the word "brethren" simply means "brothers.") What did the Lord say? Did He say: "Tell my mother and brothers to come in so that I may talk to them"? \_\_\_\_\_ Instead He asked the question, "WHO IS MY \_\_\_\_\_? AND WHO ARE MY \_\_\_\_\_?" (Matthew 12:48). To be someone's brother means to be very close to someone. Jesus was asking a question like this: "Who are those who have a very close relationship with Me?" The Lord then answered His own question. Instead of pointing to Mary and his four brothers, who did He point to (Matthew 12:49)? \_\_\_\_\_ Notice carefully what He said about this matter:

MATTHEW 12:50-"For whosoever shall \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of my \_\_\_\_\_ which is in heaven, the same is my \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_."

LUKE 8:21-"My \_\_\_\_\_ and My \_\_\_\_\_ are these which \_\_\_\_\_ the Word of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ it."

According to these two verses, ***are you closely related to the Lord Jesus?*** Are you His brother or sister? Are you a member of His family? The important thing is not whether you grew up in the same house with Jesus. The important thing is not whether you were part of Mary and Joseph's family. The important thing is whether you do His will and obey His Word!

We learn more about the brothers of Jesus in John 7:3-14. Read these verses and circle the statements that are true:

- Jesus' brothers wanted Jesus to stay in Galilee because they were afraid that if He were to go to Jerusalem He might be killed.
- Jesus' brothers wanted Jesus to go into Judaea.
- Jesus' brothers wanted Jesus to perform great works and miracles before the crowds that would be gathered in Jerusalem.
- Jesus' brothers wanted Jesus to do his works "secretly" so that not too many people would know about it.
- Jesus' brothers wanted Jesus to make Himself known to the public and to show Himself to the world.

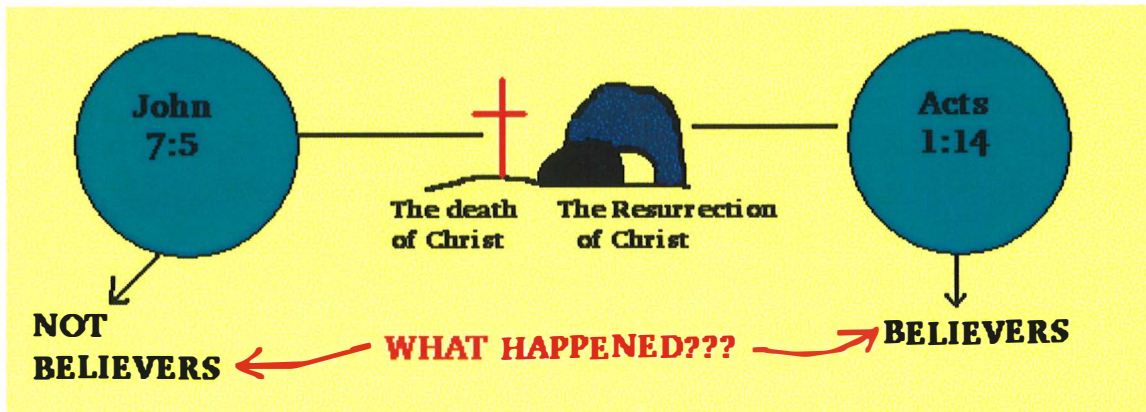
The brothers of Jesus wanted Him to be in the limelight. They wanted Him to be in the public view. They wanted Him to act as a SHOWMAN, performing His mighty works before men.

Did these brothers really believe in Jesus as their LORD and SAVIOUR (John 7:5)? \_\_\_\_\_ Perhaps they were like the Jews we read about in John chapter 6 who wanted Jesus to be King so that He could feed their stomachs, heal their bodies, and set them free from Roman rule (see John 6:15,24-27). They did not understand that Jesus had come into the world to do something on the INSIDE of a man (see John 7:38), not just to take care of the needs that men have on the OUTSIDE. The Lord's brothers were UNBELIEVERS. Each of them needed a NEW HEART and a NEW LIFE. They needed to be born again (John 3:7).

### Something Happened!

Read Acts 1:13-15. These verses describe a gathering of believers (disciples) after the death and resurrection of Christ. Who do we find gathered together and praying with the disciples of the Lord

Jesus (Acts 1:14)? \_\_\_\_\_ The brothers of Jesus are now believers. Something has happened to these men:



Jesus' brothers are now CHANGED men who were once unbelievers but who became believers. What brought about such a change? What happened? The Bible gives us a clue as to what happened to these men. One of the Lord's brothers was named JAMES. What happened to JAMES one day that made such a big difference in his life (see 1 Cor. 15:4,5,7)? \_\_\_\_\_ This man saw the risen Lord Jesus Christ. The same thing that changed "DOUBTING THOMAS" into "CONVINCED THOMAS" also changed "UNBELIEVING JAMES" into "BELIEVING JAMES." It was the resurrection of Christ that made such a big difference in the lives of these brothers. In the next chapter we will learn about another man whose life was completely changed because he saw the risen Lord! (Can you guess who that might be?)

## BROTHER JAMES

James was probably the oldest son of Joseph and Mary (not counting Jesus), because his name is listed first (see Matthew 13:55). In Galatians 1:19 he is called "James the \_\_\_\_\_."

We have already studied two other men by the name of James: James the son of \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 10:2) and James the son of \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 10:3). See also [Chapter 3](#) and [Chapter 8](#) where the different men in the New Testament who have the name "JAMES" are discussed. The JAMES who was the brother of the Lord was not one of the 12 disciples, but after the resurrection he did become a very important leader in the church.

James became the important leader of the large church located in the city of Jerusalem, the city where the church first began (Acts 2). We read about him in Acts 15:13; 21:18 and Galatians 1:19; 2:9. In Galatians 2:9 James is said to be a "P \_\_\_\_\_" along with Cephas (Peter) and J \_\_\_\_\_. A PILLAR is a very important part of a building. The PILLAR holds up the building and without the pillars the building will fall (as the story of Samson illustrates). This comparison shows how important Peter, John and James were in the days of the early church.

Why was James so strong? Why was he so important to the church? Why was this man such a fine leader? The answer is found in the kind of man he was and the kind of life that he lived. Historical tradition tells us that James was called "JAMES THE JUST" or "JAMES THE RIGHTEOUS ONE." James lived such a holy, righteous, and godly life that he was given this nickname. James was also a man of prayer. His knees were said to be hard as a camel's knees because of the time he spent in prayer, pouring out his heart to God and praying especially for the Jewish people whom he loved so



dearly. James had a special ministry to the Jewish people (see James 1:1).

If people really knew how you lived your life every day of the week, what nickname might they give you? Do you spend any time on your knees? Do you spend any time before an open Bible or do you only open your Bible when you come to church or in family worship? Would you be called \_\_\_\_\_ (write your own name) THE JUST? Would, you be called "A PILLAR"?

## Two Authors

The Lord God used two of the brothers of Jesus to be the human authors of His holy Word. James wrote the book of James. Jude wrote the book of Jude. Jude is the same man who is mentioned in Mark 6:3 ("Juda"). Jude calls himself "the servant of the \_\_\_\_\_," and "the brother of \_\_\_\_\_" (Jude 1:1).

It is interesting how both of these men begin their books (see James 1:1 and Jude 1:1). They do not say, "I am the brother of Jesus Christ. I grew up with Jesus in the same house. I lived under the same roof. Very few people have ever had this special privilege." In these opening verses did James or Jude say anything about being the brother of the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_ These men were humble men. These men knew who Jesus Christ really was: HE WAS THE LORD OF LORDS AND THE KING OF KINGS. They both began their books by saying, "I AM A SERVANT (SLAVE) OF JESUS CHRIST!" They did **not** say, "He is my brother"; instead they said, "He is my Lord and Master, and I am His slave! I must do His will and obey His word!" They learned the lesson of Matthew 12:50 and Luke 8:21!

Is it possible for you to be a child of Mary and Joseph and, grow up in the same home as Jesus?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Is it possible for you to be a SLAVE of Jesus Christ and to obey His Word and do His will?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Are you His SLAVE? Are you His true brother or sister (Matthew 12:50)? \_\_\_\_\_

## The Death of James

Do not confuse James the brother of the Lord with the James the son of Zebedee, who was killed in Acts 12:2. James the brother of the Lord lived longer, but finally he too suffered death as a martyr. He was put to death by the Jewish High Priest about 62 A.D. (about eight years before the city of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans). The historian Josephus tells us that James was either stoned or thrown from the pinnacle (wing) of the temple and then stoned. We know that James the Just went into the presence of the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8) and will be blessed forever because Jesus was his heavenly Lord and Saviour and King and not because he was Jesus' earthly brother. Will you go into the presence of the Lord when you die? Will you be blessed forever and ever? Do you have to fear death? Why or why not?

For further study, see our study called [Plain Talk on Death](#).

WHO'S FOOLING WHO ?

"...SIN, WHEN IT IS FINISHED,  
BRINGETH FORTH DEATH"  
— JAMES 1:15



EVERBODY IS ENTITLED TO A  
LITTLE WRONG-DOING, AND I  
HAVEN'T GOT MY SHARE OF  
IT YET

" FOOLS MAKE A MOCK AT SIN " — PROVERBS 14:9